

The Udall amendment would require the administration to secure explicit authorization from Congress before our forces would be able to respond to all kinds of potential Iranian attacks. That would include attacks on American civilians.

Let me say that again. Some of our colleagues want us to go out of our way and create a brandnew obstacle that would block the President from swiftly responding if Iran attacks American civilians, our U.S. diplomatic facilities, or Israel, or the military forces of an ally or partner, or if Iran closes the Strait of Hormuz. In all of these scenarios, the Udall amendment would hamstring the executive branch from reacting quickly. In modern warfare, time is of the essence. The War Powers Resolution explicitly recognizes the reality that administrations may need to respond quickly and with flexibility.

This amendment could even constrain our military from acting to prevent an imminent attack. As written, it appears to suggest they must absorb the attack, take the attack first before defending themselves. And even then, for how long would they be allowed to conduct retaliatory strikes? Completely absurd. Totally dangerous.

Let's take an example. Iran attacks Israel. No timely response from the United States, especially if Congress happens to be on recess. Iran attacks American citizens. The President's hands would be tied. This is never how the American Presidency has worked, for a very good reason.

So I would ask my colleagues to stop obsessing about Donald Trump for a moment and think about a scenario involving a future or past President. Hypothetically, then, would it be appropriate for Congress to tie a President's hands with legislation preventing military action to defend NATO allies from a Russian attack without explicit congressional approval? If conflict came in August and the United States and its NATO allies didn't act decisively, frontline states could be gobbled up before Congress could even convene to consider an AUMF.

The Udall amendment would represent a huge departure from the basic flexibility that Presidents in both parties have always had to take immediate military steps, short of a full-scale war, to respond to immediate crises.

This ploy is being advertised as some kind of courageous reassertion by Congress of our constitutional authority, but it is nothing of the sort. It is a departure from our constitutional traditions and norms.

Nobody is talking about a full-scale war with Iran—not the President; not the administration. Heaven forbid, if that situation were to arrive, consultation with Congress and widespread public support would, of course, be necessary. The Udall amendment is something completely different. It defines self-defense in a laughably narrow way and then in all other situations pro-

poses that President Trump should be stripped of the basic powers of his office unless Democrats in Congress write him a permission slip. I don't think so.

This would be a terrible idea at any moment, let alone as Iran is escalating its violence and searching for any sign of American weakness.

So I would ask my colleagues: Do not embolden Iran. Do not weaken our deterrence. Do not undermine our diplomacy. Do not tie the hands of our military commanders. Reject this dangerous mistake when we vote on the Udall amendment tomorrow.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1790, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1790) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell (for Inhofe) modified amendment No. 764, in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell (for Romney) amendment No. 861 (to amendment No. 764), to provide that funds authorized by the Act are available for the defense of the Armed Forces and United States citizens against attack by foreign hostile forces.

McConnell amendment No. 862 (to amendment No. 861), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 863 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 764), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 864 (to amendment No. 863), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 865, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 866 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 865), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 867 (to amendment No. 866), of a perfecting nature.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote scheduled for noon today be at 11:45.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

S. 1790

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as the leader and I announced yesterday, we have an agreement in place to vote on passage of the Defense authorization bill today and then on an amendment to the bill tomorrow, led by Senators UDALL, KAIN, MERKLEY, MURPHY, PAUL, and LEE, to accommodate all Senators who wish to vote. That is why we are doing it tomorrow. If the Udall amendment is passed, it would be adopted to the Defense authorization bill even though the vote occurs afterward.

I want to thank the leader for understanding our position that the Senate ought to vote on this important amendment, which in essence would prohibit funds for hostilities with Iran without an affirmative authorization from Congress. Congress gets to approve or disapprove wars, period. It is crucial for the Senate and Congress as a whole to examine potential conflicts and to exercise our authority in matters of war and peace.

Let's start with the facts. Ever since President Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, our two countries have been on a path toward conflict. For the past month, we have been locked in a cycle of escalating tensions with Iran. Iran attacked a tanker in the Gulf region and shot down a U.S. surveillance drone. The U.S. Government has responded to both provocations, and the President reportedly considered and then pulled back on a military strike.

The American people are worried—and rightly so—that even if the President isn't eager for war, he may bumble us into one. Small provocations in the Middle East can often spin out of control. Our country has learned that the hard way. When the President is surrounded by hawkish advisers like John Bolton and Secretary Pompeo, the danger is even more acute.

So while the majority leader says that "no one is talking about war," that is only true until the folks do start talking about war, and by then, the chance to clarify that this President requires congressional authorization before engaging in major hostilities may have passed us by.

And this not talking about war? Well, the President said he was 10 minutes away from major provocation, if the reports are correct. It would have been on Iranian soil, three missile bases. And the President at one point said, in effect: We will smash Iran, blow it to smithereens—or something to that effect. People are talking about war. This President is.